THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) Representations have been received from Associations of foreign liquor companies pleading for reduction in import duty on alcoholic beverages. From time to time such representations are received from various quarters either for enhancing or reducing duties. Tariff on liquor, as in case of other commodities, is decided taking into account various factors, including the interests of the domestic producers. An appropriate decision on the matter will be announced in the budget for the year 2001-2002.

Declaration of Floor Price of Rubber

575. SHRI KHAGEN DAS: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the floor price of rubber has not been declared so far; and

(b) if so, what steps have been taken by Government to save the poor rubber growers of Kerala and Tripura?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) In order to stabilise the declining prices of Natural Rubber in the country, the Government of India have since August, 1997 made a market intervention through STC for procurement of Natural Rubber on Government account. STC has so far procured 52,429 MT of Natural Rubber. To enhance the consumption of indigenous rubber Government has also imposed a ban on import of Natural Rubber under the Advance Licence Scheme w.e.f. 20.2.1999. The procurement of Natural Rubber by STC is continuing for supply to ALHs against indents placed by them with STC.